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William B. White's recent column "The Case of the CIA and Student Groups" contains a dangerous statement in speaking of foundations: "The simple fact is that it (foundation money) too is very near to being public money, that is, government money, for had it not all been poured into precisely these foundations, a very great part of it would have been rightfully seized by government tax collectors."

First, nobody's assets belong to the government or are rightfully seized by it. If I decided to give \$5 to the John F. Kennedy Memorial, or if a millionaire bequeaths his estate to a foundation or individual, is that money which should have been seized by the government?

Second, it implies tacit government control over foundations, approval hanging on whether the government condones particular activities. There are broad ground rules for tax exemptions, the broader the better. Where these rules are violated, the tax status changes, but the funds are not rightfully seized.

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